The Anarcho-Syndicalist

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Editorial

Number 2 September 1999

Welcome to the second edition of the Anarcho-Syndicalist, brought to you by those highly industrious people, the ASG-M.

Much has happened in the wide world of anarcho syndicalism since the last edition came out. The most notable event in my mind was the recent conference, 'Anarcho Syndicalism into the 21st Century'. Speaking personally the conference can only be seen as a success, it was great to be a part of a weekend where many different ideas were voiced. This is a very positive sight for anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism in Melbourne. The conference displayed a great deapth of enthusiasm for anarchism in general. For me there were many highlights of the conference, workshops such as 'Anarcho syndicalism with in the perspectives of Anarchism' and 'Customary Lore', both challenged and educated, but for me the absolute highlight of the conference was the 'Towards a Federation Plenary Session'. There was a great open discussion of the idea of a federation. A very positive session which gave me the feeling that what we, the ASG-M, aim for is a possibility and can be achieved.

On this note I would like to congratulate and thank my fellow comrades in the ASG-M. In my mind, we did a great job of organising and running the conference considering our numbers (excuse the bias but this is an editorial!).

Another thank you, and to me no less important, goes to all those people who conducted talks, provided stalls and helped us with the running and organisation of the conference. Your efforts will not be forgotten. Well that is enough from me regarding the conference. A full report is contained in this issue, so read on.

Other highlights of this issue include our regular columns; Anarchy & Text, On the Dole Queue, It Happened in History and Sport.

This is my last editorial as secretary of the ASG-M, so I would like to wish Madwog the best of luck with this job. I know you will be as mystified with his editorials as you were with mine (note the sarcasm).

Finally we welcome any contributions, so if you do have something to say or would like to respond to anything, please contact us:

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Read on and Enjoy!

In Solidarity,

Egon Charman
Secretary ASG-M

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NEWS SHORTS

Local, Interstate and Overseas News

MELBOURNE JUNE 18 DAY OF ACTION

June 18 marked the first day of the world's richest nations (G8) meeting to discuss the further promotion of economic globalisation and corporate dominance. It was also a day when activists came together for an international day of action, protest and carnival in financial centres around the world.

In Melbourne the day started with a Jubilee 2000 protest at 8pm outside Parliament House. At the same time a Critical Mass set out from North Ltd. headquarters, arriving at the Flinders Street Clocks for a free breakfast provided by Food Not Bombs. Leaflets were handed out but before long the actions had started. Ten of us, some on bike, some on foot, proceeded to block off the busy intersection in a spontaneous Reclaim The Streets. Fifty cops couldn't stop us for fifteen minutes. The day had begun.

Protests outside Westpac/Bank of Melbourne branches and McDonalds outlets were conducted. The Nike store was paintbombed, while others caused havoc at Herald-Sun headquarters and the Casino. Anti-capitalist and anti-statist graffiti sprang up all over the city. Banners and street theatre featured at the corner of Bourke and Swanston streets. A large gathering outside the stock exchange with banners and speakers took place at 12 noon. Wombats killed by logging and deforestation were placed outside the main entrance, which caught the attention of many passers-by.

For me, the most memorable moment was in the Bourke Street Mall where a small group of us turned the mall into our own media with hundreds of chalk messages. We soon had a crowd of well over one hundred people encircling us, reading and asking what we were doing. Several people took chalk and joined us, putting their own thoughts and feelings onto the pavement. The way people stopped, read every message and slogan and then joined in was truly inspiring.

Several times, mounted police tried to herd us away and a few of us were physically assaulted during the day. All of this while three DSP/Resistance members stood on the corner of the mall trying to sell their paper. It was one of those beautiful images that will stay with me forever.

Later that evening at a Monash APEC lecture at Shell headquarters, Kim Beazley, leader of the Labor Party, was given a special treat, a vegan vanilla pie square in the face. As a result, June 18 in Melbourne made the national and international news.

The connections and networks made between activists and groups on this day was perhaps the most important achievement, but there were disappointments. The complete lack of trade union involvement on the day, despite numerous invitations over the past six months, and the noticeable absence of some activist groups, was in stark contrast to the way so many groups in places like London managed to work together. The conservatism of trade union bureacracies and the parliamentary reformism of many activists in Australia makes me wonder whether they will ever be part of the struggle against capitalism, but we live in hope.

For more on June 18 in Melbourne, visit http:/ www.antimedia.net/melbj18/ or for reports from overseas, visit http://www.j18.org.

-Guy

BRUNSWICK RESIDENTS FIGHT HEALTH CLINIC CLOSURE

On Wednesday, 7th July, over 300 Moreland residents gathered at theBrunswick Town Hall to protest the decision to close the Brunswick Community Health Centre Medical Service. The feeling was of anger and disgust towards the Board of Management for the lack of community involvement in this decision. At times shouting matches broke out, especially when the Board representative tried to justify this lack of community consultation, and when the Chair tried to deny some residents a chance to speak later in the meeting.

Helen Lee, who initiated the community picket, presented CEO Philip Moran with a petition signed by more than 1700 residents. A motion was carried that the Board of Management, at its next meeting, rescind the decision to close the medical service and to set up an independent working party to investigate ways to maintain the service. Further motions endorsed a joint delegation of the Moreland Community Health Centre Board, the City of Moreland and the Save our Community Medical Service Committee to both the Federal and State Health ministers seeking funding and support to continue and expand the medical service. These were passed unanimously.

The most moving statements were made by two local residents, one a refugee, who both expressed the importance of the community medical service to themselves and their families, and why the private medical services in the area, with high patient turnover and short consultations, are grossly inadequate. The people I spoke to left with a resolve that we will overturn this decision. The Board of Management, along with the Local, State and Federal governments, are going to have a fight on their hands.

-Guy

CZECH ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST FREE AGAIN!

On 15 May this year the International Secretariat of the Freie Arbiter Union (FAU, German section of the IWA) received a short message from the International Secretary of the Czech-Slovak Federation of Social Anarchists (FSA-IWA) with information that comrade Michal Patera was released from custody and that comrade Václav Jez was released from prison on bail.

The FAU sent e-mail messages around the world thanking all comrades who had contributed to this unexpected development by attacking the repression of the Czech state through actions, demonstrations, protest letters, solidarity events and donations.

Michal Patera is being accused of "attempted murder" according to the czech criminal code for having defended himself against five Nazi-Skins who attacked him in an obvious attempt on his life. One of the attackers was injured by a gunshot. Václav Jez was convicted and given a two-year prison sentence in July 1997 after having defended himself against Nazis in a similar case.

-FAU-IAA

DOMESTIC WORKERS STAGE DEMONSTRATION IN CITY

Domestic workers for the first time in an organised way demonstrated in the city Thursday,4th June,99 to raise their six-point demand,mainly better living standard. Some 200 such workers from Fakirerpool,Kamalapur, Motijheel,Shahjahanpur,Mugda,Dholaipar and the outskirts of Tongi staged a one hour token sit-in at Muktangan from 4 p.m.

Their demands included recognising them as workers and giving appropriate wages,stopping the repression on them,providing shelter and Medicare and ensuring education for their children.

DomesticWorkers Association,Bangladesh(DWAB),formed under the auspices of National Garments Workers Federation (NGWF-IWA) in last month,7th May,99,organised the sit in. It was addressed by DWAB co-ordinator Amirul Haque Amin and members Fatema Begum,Hamida Khatun, Shahida Sarkar,Mrs Nahar,Hasna Banu,Subal Sarkar,Ohiduzzan and Oliur Rahman. Narrating the subhuman condition of the domestic workers,the speakers said the government has directed people to deposit biodata and photos of domestic workers.But there is no provision to issue appointment letters for them. They sought co-operation from the civil society to run the organisation with the spirit of ensuring rights of all as domestic workers are yet to be organised despite they are a major workforce.

The D.W.A.B decided to observe an "organisational month" from June 11th to July 9th.They will organise a grand rally of the domestic workers in the capital after observing the organisational month.

-NGWF-IWA

DWAB members demonstrating in Muktangan in support of their six-point log of claims

I99 Conference in San Francisco

The International Solidarity-Conference '99 (I99) took place in San Francisco from the 1st to the 6th of June '99 and was well attended with about 100 participants from the USA (IWW, WSA, "Food not bombs" etc.), Australia (ASG-M, IWW), Canada (IWW), France (CNT Vignoles), Switzerland (Aussersieler Anarchisten,A-Infos), Sweden (SAC, SUF), Germany (FAU) and Korea (KCTU). The NGWF from Bangladesh and the nigerian IWA-section, the Awareness League, had also announced their participation. Sadly, neither of the two delegates arrived at the place, last minute visa problems probably thwarting their plans. Some other organisations stated their support and solidarity but could not participate - for the most part due to financial reasons.

Extensive topics were discussed in talks and workgroups. Besides "classic syndicalist" questions such as youth organising in unions or direct action as a means of union work the spectre of topics ranged from ecology and workers movement over antifascism, the CIAs drug politics to reports about work with homeless people and thus reflected the whole field where anarchosyndicalist work can and must take place.

It was the declared aim of the project to get mutual communication, exchange of experience and common activities going again. Because, as the call for the event also stated: "The revolution starts when the factionalism stops". This is based on the simple realization that people join syndicalist unions to receive and practice solidarity from and with others and not to wage wars against other workers. Especially at a time such as today, when syndicalism in its various forms is finally winning workers interest and international strength again, it is necessary to set a workers movement against the transnationally operating companies and structures such as the WHO, the IMF and the Worldbank which shows solidarity and acts - in some points at least - cooperatively.

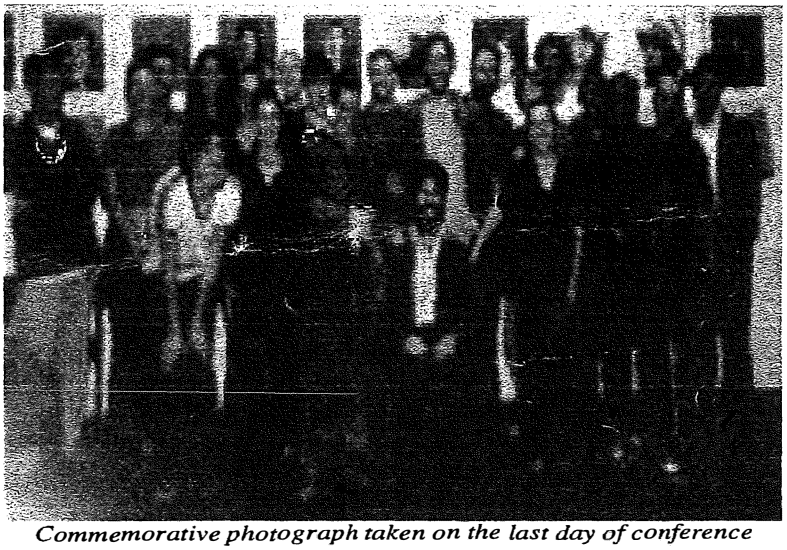
This need for practical, mutual solidarity was the central theme in all conversations and discussions of the conference. Whether from the striking steel workers or the successful example of the struggle of workers in the peepshow "Lusty Lady Shop" in San Francisco - successful organising and ideas for activity were received gratefully for ones own use. Several ideas for mutual support - be it in organising a union group in a company or against the planned protests against the WHO summit in Seattle in November 1999 - were discussed lively and will surely be further developed and realized after the conference.

Translation: R./FAU-IAA Bremen

Anarcho-Syndicalism into the 21st Century

A report on the conference 'Anarcho-Syndicalism into the 21st Century' organised by the Anarcho-Syndicalist Group of Melbourne (ASGM) and held over the Easter Weekend at the Centre for Indigenous Studies building in Bouverie St., Carlton.

Considered to have been the best anarcho-syndicalist conference in years, 'Anarcho-Syndicalism into the 21st Century' attracted people from the length and breadth of Australia as well as Britain, Japan, Korea and New Zealand. The ASGM organised the conference in response to the growing interest in the ideas and methods of anarcho-syndicalism. The conference featured a wide variety of seminars, discussions and history workshops as well as nightly social activities that included slide shows, feasting and spontaneous outbursts of singing and dancing.



Commemorative photograph taken on the last day of conference

First up on day one was an introductory information session which included reports from delegates from interstate and overseas. Reports were received from the ASG-M, the Anarcho-Syndicalist Group of Perth (ASG-P), the Roseberry Anarcho-Syndicalists as well as reports by comrades from Korea and New Zealand.

The conference proper opened with a history workshop on the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in Australia with particular focus on the the IWW's involvement in the anti-conscription campaign during World War One and the subsequent imprisonment of the 'Sydney Twelve'.

The history theme continued the following day with a workshop on the International Workers Asociation (IWA) in Australia from the establishment of an exile section of the CNT-B, the Bulgarian section of the IWA, in Sydney in 1956. A Spanish CNT-in-exile section was established in Melbourne in 1965.

The Melbourne CNT-in-exile started the first Anarchist Black Cross group in Australia, initially known by its Spanish name - Cruz Negra Anarquista. CNT-in-exile members were active in establishing the Fitzroy Legal Service and the Tenants Union of Victoria as well as the Collingwood Free Store.

The best part of the IWA history workshop was concerned with the Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation (ASF) founded in Australia in 1986 and admitted to the IWA as the Australian section in 1988.

A total of five local unions and industrial associations were affiliated to the ASF between 1986 and 1992. The best known of these organisations was the Public Transport Workers Association (PTWA) which was active in the public transport industry and published the most popular anarcho-syndicalist paper in the country 'Sparks'. The PTWA and ASF locals were actively participated in support groups during the 1990 tramway dispute.

The ASF locals in Melbourne were active in a number of disputes in the health, building and entertainment industries during the late eighties and early nineties as well as being involved in community struggles most notably the fight against the construction of overhead power lines in the northern suburbs. The ASF developed the concept and practice of industrial support groups in Australia inspiring similar organisations today such as 'Food not Scabs'.

Although the ASF was involved in industrial struggle its main emphasis continued to be education about the ideas of anarcho-syndicalism through a variety of publications and regular public discussion meetings not to mention numerous posters, stickers and flyers.

The ASF was the first example of libertarian federalism in Australia since the demise of the Federation of Australian Anarchists (FAA) in 1976. The ASF made a major contribution to the development of anarcho-syndicalist organisation in Australia.

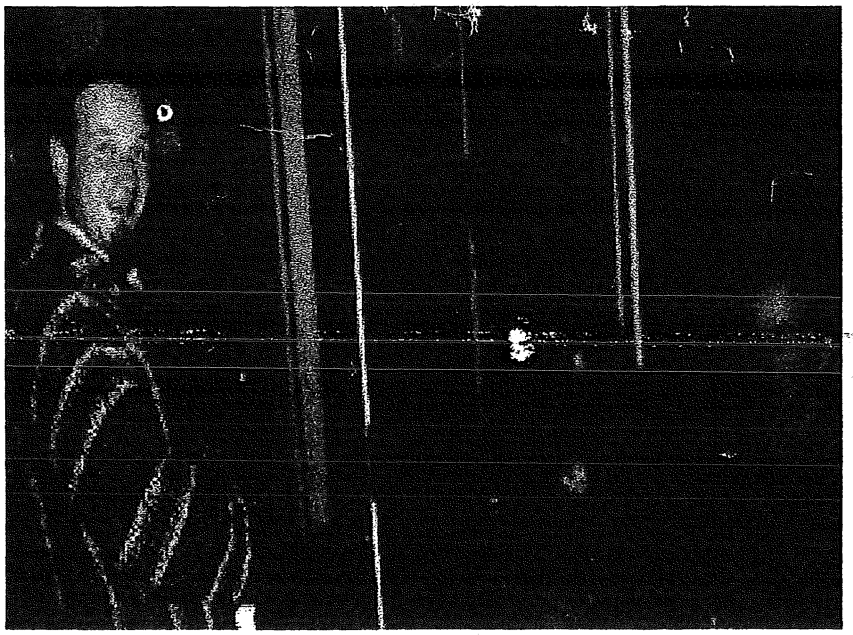
Sadly, the ASF dssolved in the wake of the disaffiliation of the Sydney local for breaches of the ASF statutes in 1992. Nevertheless, the example of the ASF continues to inspire a new generation of anarcho-syndicalists today.

Anarcho-Syndicalism into the 21st Century

There were a variety of workshops and open discussions on topics that are of concern to anarcho-syndicalists today. Anarcho-syndicalists have historically been concerned with social as well as industrial issues and this conference was no exception.

'Women and Work' was concerned with the the problems that face women in the workplace with the topic of sexual harassment figuring prominently in the discussion. Confronting sexual harassment by male workmates is the first step towards creating a union where all can practise mutual aid and solidarity. The pay rates of women still lag behind men in most industries and it is still a struggle to obtain maternity leave. Unionism was once thought to be a predominately male domain but in the post-war period more and more women are entering the workforce. Today, a greater percentage of working women are unionists than are working men.

A report was given by two health industry workers, Paul McCartan and Daniela Fortini on the conditions of work in the health industry. Nursing Assistants are paid a mere $11.53 per hour and are required to do a lot of heavy lifting. They reported that management often try to intimidate workers from joining unions and many workers from poorer countries feel their conditions are good compared to the countries they're from and as a consequence are less motivated to organise.



The hospitality industry was the subject of report by a kitchenhand member of 'Dishpigs' who are attempting to organise in an industry that is traditionally under-unionised. Low cash payment and sometimes apalling working conditions are a feature of this sector or the service industry. There are 'Dishpigs' currently working in five restaurants in Melbourne.

A migrant worker from Spain described the culture shock of working and trying to organise in Australia, still a predominately anglo-celtic culture. Unemployment amongst migrant workers in Australia remains high and a lack of on-the-job training means that they struggle with language difficulties. Migrant workers in Australia are over-represented in lower paid jobs.

A local Greek-born anarchist gave a fascinating account of the anarchist struggle in Greece. Many anarchists in Greece remain in prison and are subject to continuing harassment and oppression. Young anarchists are waging a campaign against the poor quality of education in Greece.

A workshop was held concerning using the internet as an organising tool. Many anarcho-syndicalists around the world are using the internet to disseminate information and organise on a global level.

The last two events of the conference were the best attended ones starting with a talk by Kurnai elder Robbie Thorpe on the customary lore of the Kurnai people of Gippsland in eastern Victoria. Robbie Thorpe told of the near genocide of his people and the struggle to retain their culture. Many found the similarities between customary lore and anarcho-syndicalism interesting, particularly the attitude towards the State. Robbie Thorpe pointed out there were no police, judges or prisons in Kurnai society but there was punishment with transgressors liable to be sung to death. Not a few comrades wanted their bosses sung to death.

The plenary session titled 'Towards a Federation' explored the possibilities of anarcho-syndicalist groups practising federation. It was recognised that if this is to occur, it must happen organically in the spirit of trust and solidarity. Some comrades expressed their reservations about federation revealing a fear of their individuality being submerged in such a process. Other comrades declared a commitment to realising their individuality through the collective process. It was generally felt that the conference had started a process whereby a federation of anarcho-syndicalist organisations could be possible in the future.

The Anarcho-Syndicalist Group of Melbourne is committed to this project as a first step to organising globally against international capital.

Anarchy & Text

When anarchists open a bookshop, print a journal or newspaper, or publish a pamphlet, they are continuing a long association between radical politics and text. Graffitti and small scale publications on a range of media have been common across ages and cultures. There was anti-Roman graffiti, and Egyptian pyramid builders scrawled obscenities and slogans across the walls of their rulers' tombs.

Early political flyers were printed in England in the 1600's, when parliamentarians published anonymous and very scurrilous rags about their opposition. Before and during the first French Revolution, radical political groupings used flyers, daily news sheets and graffiti to popularise their position. More recently during the upheavals in China in the late 1980's which culminated in the Tienanmin Massacre, Democracy Wall was the place where groups and individuals pasted up daily broadsheets, poetry and graphics, or announced marches and detailed lists of demands. The influences of anarchist publication reach far beyond the small numbers of active or interested anarchists in their grouplets. A public transport publication of the eighties, 'Sparks', was put together by a small group called the Public Transport Workers Association. Over a period of five years 'Sparks' began to influence the nature of debate within the official public transport unions. Workers in Tram Depots started talking about recallable delegates and shop floor democracy, and workers across all the public transport industries began to push their own recalcitrant leadership towards a more confrontational position.

Ideas are uncontrollable, something often said but still true. Their influence spreads through loungerooms, cafes, classrooms, bars and worksites, in casual conversation as much as in structured events. Over the past 100 years, anarchists have seen their ideas shift and evolve. Between 1890 and 1930, anarchist ideas were at the cutting edge of radical union activity, especially after the formation of the IWW in 1908. The 1930's saw the rise of the anti-eviction movement, with squads of riders mounted on bicycles ready to swarm on the latest house marked for eviction. After the Second World War, refugees and migrants bought with them the ideas of the European anarcho-syndicalist movements, and in the 1960's students were radicalised by their involvement in the anti-war movement, as well as the developing women's movement and the environment movement.

The 1970's was a fertile and productive period in Australian anarchist history. Freedom Collective formed in Perth in 1970, anarchists across the continent formed the Federation of Australian Anarchists in 1975, Sydney began its association with the European anarchists who emigrated to Australia in the 50's and 60's, and in 1977 Jura Bookshop opened.

In Melbourne anarchists formed the Victorian Regional Anarchist Federation in 1972, the Free Store was opened in Smith St, and free legal aid was being offered from a room at the back of the Fitzroy Library. These initiatives came from a combination of Spanish and Italian migrants, such as Vincente Ruiz, politicised students such as Red Bingham, and poets such as πo and Jas Duke.

Later in the 70's, anarchists were involved in the beginnings of the student magazines Lot's Wife and Rabelais, as well as presses such as Collective Effort, Slash Asterisk and Stop Press, and organisations such as Legal Aid and the Tenant's Union and the Poet's Union.

Anarchists are not living in a ghetto, nor are they cut off from the mainstream of Australian radical expression. Anarchists always have been and are now a living part of this city's life. We are this partly through the text and graphics we produce; in pamphlets and journals as well as web pages and internet file servers, in flyers, handbills and posters, in graffiti and paste-ups. Through these common media, anarchists influence public debate in unaccountable ways.

Text & Anarchy

Where We Stand

Where we stand' is part of the Aims, Principles and Statutes of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation (ASF). The Anarcho-Syndicalist Group of Melbourne operates in accordance with these Statutes.

The Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation is a libertarian workers movement organised according to anarcho-syndicalist principles. We aim to create a society based on liberty, mutual aid, federalism and self-management.

We believe the working class and the employing class have nothing in common. Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organise as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production and abolish the wage system.

In the present we take an active part in the struggle for worker solidarity, shorter hours, immediate wage increases and improved working conditions. And we actively oppose all attacks on workers such as conscription of labour, strike breaking, drives for increased production and longer working hours, wage cuts or unemployment.

We want worker/community self-education for complete self-management of production, distribution and social organisation. This will come about by worker/community expropriation of wealth and the creation of alternative economic systems.

We are opposed to all economic and social monopoly. We do not seek the conquest of political power, but rather the total abolition of all state functions in the life of society. Hence we reject all parliamentary activity and other collaboration with legislative bodies. We believe in fighting organisations in the workplace and community, independent of, and opposed to all political parties and Trade Union bureaucracies.

Our means of struggle include education and direct action. To ensure the full participation of all in both current struggle and the future self-management of society, we oppose centralism in our organisations. We organise on the basis of Libertarian Federalism that is from the bottom up without any hierarchy and with full freedom of initiative by both local and regional groups. All co-ordinating bodies of the Federation consist of recallable delegates with specific tasks determined by local assemblies.

We see the world as our country, humanity as our family. We reject all political and national frontiers and aim to unmask the arbitrary violence of all governments.

We oppose racism, sexism, militarism, religion, and all ideologies and institutions that stand in the way of equality and the right of people everywhere to control their own lives and their environment. We support the struggle of the aboriginal people for self-determination and land rights.

We defend the earth, skies and waters and all flora and fauna from pollution and exploitation by capitalists, militarists and Government.

ON THE DOLE QUEUE

NSW Democrat MP Ian Cohen recently drew attention to the fact unemployed workers conscripted into the 'Work-for-the-Dole' Scheme are being forced to contruct breakwaters to protect the homes of the wealthy at fashionable Byron Bay on the north coast of NSW. Apparently, the force of waves eroding the dunes threaten to collapse the palatial mansions with ocean views. Ian Cohen wondered aloud whether or not unemployed people would be press-ganged into building pyramids presumably as monuments to the rich and their fantastic and selfless contributions to society. One of the architects and overseers of the 'Work-for-the-Dole' Scheme, NSW Liberal Senator, Tony Abbott (better known as one of the leading lights of Australians for a Constitutional Monarchy) explained "When disaster strikes, all Australians are mates". This is something to bear in mind next time you find yourself the victim of disaster - like being restructured out of a job. Just get on the blower to Tony 'Really Excellent Bloke' Abbott and explain your predicament. Tony's sure to delve into his deep pockets and extract a suitable sum to tide you over until you're back on your feet. After all, we're all mates, aren't we? Good on yer, Tony! No worries, mate!

These Fish are Too Small

by M. I. Opinion

How many times have we heard politicians and the captains of industry on TV banging on about accepting lower wages so employers can create more jobs? When was the last time a politician or a company director took a pay cut? It seems that we have to take a pay cut while they continue to fatten their wallets. Hey, these fish are too small!

Since when do employers go into business to create jobs? People who choose to go into business do so to make money. Any jobs that might be created is merely incidental to the primary focus of generating profit. If the business starts to go bad, jobs get cut starting at the bottom. And if the business goes belly up, everyone's out on their arse! Except, of course, the company directors who get to keep their house and car. Any smaller and these fish would be minnows!

We're told we have to compete with the rest of the world and that the world doesn't owe us a living. How are we supposed to compete with workers living in third world dictatorships where union organisers are found dead on the outskirts of town? If we are going to compete with these workers, it seems we have to accept the kind of wages and working conditions found under military dictatorships. Wait a minute - where did those fish go?

It happened in History

by Professor Noah F. N. Lott

Members of CNT-in-exile groups arrived in Australia from the mid-50s and remained largely isolated until the late 60s. Groups of affinity were formed and published magazines and papers. In 1965, a section of the CNT-in-exile was formed in Australia. It was CNT-in-exile members in Melbourne who established the first Cruz Negra Anarquista (Anarchist Black Cross) and in 1973 the paper of the CNA/ABC 'Acracia' was published for the first time as a bi-lingual by a collective of CNT-in-exile members and local Melbourne anarchists as the Melbourne ABC. Although Acracia was devoted mainly to the plight of anarchist prisoners in Spain it occasionally published articles about the IWA (AIT) and anarcho-syndicalism. Acracia ceased publication as a bi-lingual in 1975, it continues to be published in Melbourne in Spanish to this day. There wasn't a lot of overlap between the CNT-in-exile community and the Australian anarchist movement but there was growing interest through the 1970's in the the Spanish Revolution of 1936 and the role of the CNT-FAI in it. In Melbourne, CNT exiles were involved in the setting up of the 'Free Store' in Smith St., Collingwood as well as the establishment of the Fitzroy Legal Service and the Tenanants Union of Victoria. The CNT exile community continues to agitate amongst the Spanish-speaking communities in Australia although many are getting on in years.

If you are interested in forming an anarcho-syndicalist group in your local area,

contact the ASG-M today!

Post: P.O. Box 98, East Brunswick 3056 * *E-mail:* asgm@xchange.anarki.net * *Phone:* 0414 380 211

Yorta Yorta

This interview was conducted at the Yorta Yorta Solidarity Day on Saturday, January 30, 1999, in Shepparton.

Madwog: *Hello, my name is George, and I'm interviewing Monica Morgan. Native Title Co-ordinator for the Yorta Yorta. Monica, thanks for the interview. Would you like to start by explaining what is the Yorta Yorta, and what group of people does it entail?*

Monica: Thanks George for your invitation. The Yorta Yorta people are a nation of people who's country is New South Wales and Victoria. It straddles the Murray river. It's described as Riverina country. The area of the country, I'm not good on the kilometre side of it, but it comes from just west of halong along the Murray river to just east of Kohuna, it goes as far north to just under Derilduri, and south around Murchison, and it takes in the major towns of Wangaratta, Shepparton, Meripuna, Echuca, and Moama. I think that's all the major towns I can think of. The nation of people is a collection of family groups who have got connection to that country through each other and through a common language. The language itself is called the Yorta Yorta language.

Madwog: *I understand you (Yorta Yorta) had a Native Title claim and a court case in late 1998. Would you like to comment on that?*

Monica: The Yorta Yorta people for many years dating right back to the 1800's have been putting in petitions, making demands of government in relation to our rights for fishing, asking for areas land for our people. We've put in quite a number of different land claims. Sometimes it was confined to the Barmah forest. Other times it extended to the BahMemora forest. This is our first claim that we've actually asked, put in a native title claim that encompasses all our traditional country. So it's quite extensive. The lands that we're able to claim for under the native title legislation are those lands that are deemed crown lands. They would form about one percent of the total land mass of Yorta Yorta traditional country. So in reality it's a very small portion. The Native Title Act requires, under their legislation, that all lands deemed freehold cannot be claimed. So in turning our attention tho the areas of land that can be claimed under native title we are asking that first, we are recognised that our family our ancestors our ancestors and the present people today are recognised as being the traditional people of that country. We also wish to have recognition that our laws and customs that has been a part of our ancestors is also a part of us today. We also ask for the ability to be able to hunt fish and gather and do all those pursuits that we believe are cultural and part of our custom. We also ask that at the end of the day that indigenous people or Yorta Yorta people in particular have a say in the management of the country and it's waters.

Madwog: *Would you like to comment on the determination of the recent court case?*

Monica: In making application under Native Title, we made the application, one of the very first that went in 1994, it went through a process of mediation of about 300 respondents or parties with an interest in the lands that we've claimed. That mediation process was supposed to come to a conclusion where we were to make an agreement about something like an agreement on how each other was supposed to coexist on that country. Unfortunately out of the 300 odd parties we spoke with not one could come to an agreement with us. The major sticking point was that they weren't or didn't want to acknowledge our existence as being the original indigenous inhabitants of the country. So we didn't even get past the

first base. So in that it was taken by the Native Title tribunal and lodged in federal court. That is something that happens after a mediation process fails. It's not something that Yorta Yorta people asked for initially. So the federal court then takes on the role of taking in evidence of both the applicant who is the Yorta Yorta and respondents. And the respondents are parties who have been entered in the case who either have a financial interest or some other interest within the country. When our application went to court in 1996, there were over 400 respondents. These are people who didn't enter into the mediation but waited until the federal court. The determination after 11,000 pages of transcript, about 15 feet of shelving space of written evidence was handed in, made a determination that one, the Yorta Yorta people were not the original inhabitants of the country bar two ancestors. We put up 12 ancestors. He only could recognise two. He said that Yorta Yorta people, Native Title, or even their laws, traditions, and customs were washed away with the tide of history in the late 1800's. He went on further to say that the laws and customs of our people, even if they were to exist today, even if our Native Title weren't washed away with the tide of history, that we do not represent the same people who our ancestors were in 1788. So, in fact, what we got was a very ethnocentric, centralised, or European version of how indigenous people should be today. The court did not take into consideration the impacts of colonisation. The court did not take into consideration that indigenous people were in occupation on their own country. That we consider that our own bloodline, our retainment of our connection with each other as a community, a connection with our country should have been sufficient to prove our native title, but the determination proved otherwise.

Madwog: *Following the determination in court, are there any other legal avenues that you have to have to follow through?*

Monica: Well, as of Friday 29th January, we lodged an appeal. The appeal is on 11 points of law that we believe that the judge erred, and I've just talked about what we felt those were. In going to an appeal, we now sit before a full bench of the Federal Court. It is now up to us to point out to those judges parts within our evidence that were not taken into consideration by the judge. We will also take into further points of law that we believe he did not consider in his final determination. If and when this appeal is successful, that would mean that the determination would be taken back to the single judge to redetermine on those point of law we've made to the Federal Court.

Madwog: *Native Title itself, to my understanding, is a limited form of land tenure. Do you have any comments on that?*

Monica: The Yorta Yorta people only see it as a very small part of our overall strategy of land justice. Essentially, we're worried about our land and the environment and our continuing occupation is of course focused on the continuing livelihood of our country. We agitate and we're trying on a political level as well as other government departmental levels, whether it is through legislation of land rights or whether it's through constitutional change, or whether it is through reconciliation, or whatever other forms it might take, we're still pursuing those and we'll always pursue those for total land justice and social justice for indigenous for indigenous people. But in the interim, we saw that there was a need to put in an application for native title to at least be able to get some foot in the door to be part of the management regime that determine what happens to our country. So that was the thinking behind the Yorta Yorta people's participation in Native Title. We understand, acknowledge, and know that it is a very limited part of our overall land, and of course it doesn't take into consideration our concerns over lands even freehold. I mean, you cant just take very small portions of the total land area and say that is all you can have your interest to. We as indigenous people look at our whole land and we say to you whether it is freehold or crown it is still Yorta Yorta country.

Madwog: *Have you received much support from non indigenous people both here locally, in Australia, and possibly even overseas?*

Monica: I have to say that we've been overwhelmed with the level of support just from the people from the ground level and non indigenous people from the ground level. They are totally disgusted in many cases in what they perceive as a lack of justice not only for the Yorta Yorta but for all indigenous people. They hear the words and see mouth moving by people like John Howard (Australian Prime Minister) and different ones saying that reconciliation is something that is gonna be here by the year 2000. But the reality speaks very differently. And it's very very important for non indigenous people to not feel disillusioned too much by their law and government because it is there to be changed. And this is what the indigenous people, we can't be the only ones to agitate for change. That it has to be the total peoples who live on this land that has to make that change. And the change is gonna come from the ground level. That's where the strength and that's where the people have to, not only with their vote because votes are very limited. But also by their presence on the street and by their presence in the forums. We're gonna have reconciliation forums next year, we're gonna have forums about the republic, we're gonna have forums about constitutional change. They are the forums that unless indigenous peoples are recognised within the very essence and skeleton of your society, then we're ever always gonna be on the outer fringes.

The Anarcho-Syndicalist
Letters to the Editor

Letter to the Editor
'The Anarcho-Syndicalist'

It was good to see the publication of the first edition of *The Anarcho-Syndicalist*. I hate to admit it but it is a better looking piece of work than the first *Direct Action* that I put out for the IWW.

The ASGM and the wobblies are very close in our outlook and beliefs in how to go about making a change, so to see your paper come out is an encouragement to all of us. The more radical, ratbag papers, the better!!

Cheers,
Wal Larkin
Editor, Direct Action
Paper of the IWW in Australia
Bellingen, NSW

Thank you for the compliment, Wal. It is encouraging to see comrades looking at what we have in common rather than dwelling on our differences and it is a refreshing change from the disappointing sectarian attitude we've come to expect from the likes of 'Rebel Worker'. I sincerely hope that 'The Anarcho-Syndicalist' can make a contribution, however small, to the growing public discussion about the ideas and methods of libertarian unionism. - Ed.

Letter to the Editor,
The Anarcho-Syndicalist

We are writing in connection with an incident at the recent conference organised by the ASG-M, 'Anarcho-Syndicalism into the 21st Century', which we were excluded from. As you will be aware, this incident resulted in the production and distribution of a statement by us, entitled *Anarchists Expel Left Communists from Conference: Violence Threatened to Silence Working Class Militants*

Following the issuing of our statement, we have had the opportunity to speak to Leigh Kendall of the ASG-M and some other anarcho-syndicalists, and to reflect upon the incident. We are glad that Leigh Kendall states that he opposes all forms of political censorship. It is possible that, to a certain extent, there were misunderstandings on both sides, during this incident.

We remain opposed to all forms of political censorship, and to political violence in such meetings, and we still believe that we should have been able to distribute our revolutionary literature at the ASG-M conference.

We remain committed to our revolutionary principles - including the political analysis in our statement on this incident. Leigh Kendall states now that he favours a full, frank, and non-violent political discussion, involving other anarchists, with left communists. We look forward to such a discussion.

Sincerely yours,

The two left communists excluded from the ASG-M conference.
West Brunswick, Victoria
(names withheld at the authors request)

The ASGM organised a conference to discuss anarcho-syndicalism - not 'left communism' (whatever that is) nor anything else. The ASGM has no intention of supressing or disrupting conferences organised to discuss 'left communism'. The two left communists were invited to participate in the seminars and workshops if they wished. However, it was clear by the agressive behaviour of the left communists insulting the conference organisers that they were intent on disrupting the conference - the kind of 'intervention' that some left-wing groups are reknown for. The two left communists were asked to leave. Rather than approaching the ASGM directly to discuss their grievances, the two left communists inserted a leaflet attacking the ASGM into copies of the No. 1 issue of 'The Anarcho-Syndicalist' that were on sale at the International Bookshop. The ASGM delegated a member to approach the two left communists directly to discuss their grievances. It was acknowleged that there may have been a misundertanding on both sides and it was agreed to discuss anarcho-syndicalism and left communism at an appropiate time and place. - Ed.

To "The Anarcho-Syndicalist"

Having just received your first issue (Summer 1999) I want to respond to the unnamed author of "Mining Roulette".

If education is the primary focus of ASG-M activity you are failing miserably. Your article had no focus, conclusion or logic, but was big on generalisations.

Your sideswipe at anti-Jabiluka activists "middle-class and upper(?!)class concerned citizens worried what Jabiluka Mine may do to their precious Kakadu National Park" may serve to make you seem correct, but it is totally false. *(What? There are NO middle-class people involved? - Ed.)* As a participant in the campaign and the blockade I can assure you that working class people from all over Australia were involved, even including miners from Mt. Isa. In Darwin the MUA gave much support that was practical and appreciated. Most people were concerned with the build up of Australia's nuclear industry and wanting to show solidarity with the Mirrar people rather than just worried about "their(?)" Kakadu National Park.

The author of this confused article, after detailing some of the dangerous conditions workers in the nuclear industry are

Letters to the Editor

continued

exposed to, then states that closing the mines would be devastating to the workers and thier families. Wanting to have a bet each way they then ask "Will Uranium Mining be the asbestos mining of tommorrow?" What kind of stupid question is that? Of course, it already is, talk to the distraught relatives of dead workers from Radium Hill! But maybe we should re-open the asbestos mines to revive the employment opportunities of the working class. Or increase police numbers?

"As an anarcho-syndicalist" you argue "that closing uranium mines, though halting the mining of uranium, does nothing to combat capitalism". So what are we supposed to do? Stand outside the mines with Sparticist-like placards calling on the workers to "Smash the Imperialist Capitalist System!"?

The closure of the nuclear industry will indeed adversely affect some sections of the working class, but the industry itself adversely effects the entire working class and the planet.

Come up with some analysis, back up your claims with some proof and stop making bland generalisations more worthy of the capitalist press. Then maybe you would make a contribution worth putting your name to.

Yours, pissed off but in solidarity
Grant Focas (zippy)
Lismore, NSW

Well, Grant, your letter has raised some interesting and contentious issues but, it must be said, that the opinions expressed in 'The Anarcho-Syndicalist' are not necessarily those of the ASG-M. However, if you want to scour the pages of 'The Anarcho-Syndicalist' for something to bash the ASG-M over the head with then, I suppose that's your perrogative.

It would appear that your criticism is directed at two opinions the author of the article expressed in the last paragraph; that there is sometimes a conflict between the environmental concerns regarding certain industries, in this case uranium mining and that the end of uranium mining in and of itself will not mean the end of capitalism.

You point out that unionists are involved in the anti-Jabiluka uranium mine campaign - no argument there. Indeed, unionists have been involved in pro-enviroment campaigns for many years. The most famous being the Green Bans campaign by the NSW Builders Labourers Federation of the 1970s (see Greens Bans, Red Union by M&V Burgmann). Concrete formwork made from rainforest timber has been banned for a number of years on unionised building sites. In the 1980s, The Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation (ASF) Melbourne Group were active in a successful campaign to prevent the construction of electricity transmission towers through the northern suburbs of Melbourne on the grounds it was harmful to the health of workers in their communities. The Public Transport Workers Association (PTWA), also affiliated to the ASF, advocated the expansion of the public transport industry on the basis of its benefit to the enviroment (amongst other things) clearly a case where the interests of industry and the enviroment converge and compliment each other. Your sarcastic suggestion that asbestos mines be re-opened or that police numbers be increased as a means of creating employment seems to imply that the interests of workers and the enviroment are mutually exclusive or, at least, the interests of the enviroment be prioritised over and above those of workers. By way of contrast, the recent formation of EarthWorker, an organisation of rank and file unionists who seek to establish a dialogue between enviromentalists and unionists as well as the ethical investment of superannuation funds and the formation of an Alternative Energy Industry Plan. Later this year they intend organising a 'No Jobs on a Dead Planet' tour.

Your facetious suggestion that we should stand outside the mines with 'Sparticist-like placards' calling on the workers to 'smash imperialism' suggests there is no alternative to state intervention in the economy. The Sparticist demand to excercise state power to impose a 'dictatorship of the proletariat' is, to some extent, analogous to demanding the excercise of state power to stop the mine at Jabiluka. Anarcho-syndicalists have long advocated workers' control of industry as an alternative to state or private control. It is within in the context of workers control that real changes and alternative industries can be realised.

The 'jobs v enviroment' debate is often exploited and manipulated by politicians and the media to push their own agendas and never countenances the direct control of industry by the workers who work in it. -Ed.

To the collective responsible for THE ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST

I'm writing to you to dispel a few dangerous myths that the writer of URANIUM MINING: HOW IT AFFECTS YOU, seems intent on spreading. To some how collapse the Anti-Grand prix campaign into the Anti Jabiluka campaign as if they are almost the same thing is about as stupid claiming uranium mining is safe. Contrary to the writers infantile assertion that the Albert park and Jabiluka campaign is a middle and upper class concern, Albert park may well have been but I'm sure the Mirrar people would be most surprised to be considered middle and upper class as would most of the other protesters. In fact a closer version of the truth is that the majority of the protesters were unemployed or students (I leave you dear author to affix the appropriate class labelling so as to make the argument simple enough for you to understand) for the simple reason that the geographic logistics of Jabiluka meant that only those with an abundance of time (not working) were able to travel 1000's of Km's to camp out miles from anywhere for an extended amount of time, this precludes stockbrokers, advertising executives, bank managers and other middle and upper class types. Just to clairify this point for the writer, Albert Park is a short tram ride away for most Melb people, unlike Jabiluka. The next missive of bullshit the writer excretes is that Kakuda National Park is THEIR (the middle and upper classes) National Park. Wake up and smell the tailings buddy, intrinsic to the anti Jabiluka campaign is the fact that the land being mined is Mirrar land AND THEY DON'T WANT THE MINE no matter how much money and jobs ERA promises, they have made this fact abundantly clear numerous times, the federal government and you choose to ignore this fact.JABILUKA IS ON MIRRAR LAND.

The writer then goes on to claim that closing Uranium mines does nothing to combat Capitalism, result in Job Security or Challenge the state, well fry me in a nuclear explosion

Letters to the Editor

continued

talk about simplifying thing to the point of stupidity. Considering the Aust Govt is intent on opening a shit load of Uranium mines ASAP, therefore making Australia a yellow cake economy I would have thought closing or preventing those mines would have punched a few holes in the Spectre of Capitalism, Job security- well call me a romantic but sometimes I think life security is more important than the myth of job security and as for challenging the state well call me an optimist but I would have thought if jabiluka was closed down in part because it was recognised that the original contract was signed under duress and that Aboriginal people do have valid claims to land and are able to define how that land is used, to in effect have some sovereignity over the land and therefore recognise prior owner ship (as opposed to Terra Nullis) . That to me sounds like a pretty fundamental challenge to the state, then again I guess some long dead 200 year old European theorist never mentioned Uranium mining on Aboriginal land in Australia so I must be wrong. The last paragraph of the article is the ultimate in ignorance, sure Asbestos Mining has left a toxic legacy but I don't think time will tell regarding the affects of Uranium Mining, we already know the affects, talk to the Aboriginal people who mine Roxby, they have tales to make your hair fall out in clumps, we cannot afford to wait for time to tell us about the affects of Uranium mining because we'll all turn into puddles of flesh while we wait.

I'm left wondering if the author thinks we need more uranium mines to provide more jobs (A Johhny Howard Argument) or if they think a workers controlled Uranium mine would be okay (sort of like the arguments used by communists in the cold war regarding the Soviet nuclear bomb program - it's a workers bomb it's okay) regardless of whose land it's being mined on. I think it would be great for there to be an anti Jabiluka campaign which works with the mine workers and the history of the Wharfies in refusing to load yellow cake onto waiting ships is encouraging in this regard. I think the writer of the article URANIUM MINING: HOW IT AFFECTS YOU has contributed nothing constructive to the issue of Uranium mining and has in fact written a wilful piece of disinformation which if anything reads more like press release from Senator Hills office than an informed Anarchist Syndicalist critique of uranium mining. I'm also curious if this view represents the views of the ASG-M group.

Peace, Love and Molatovs,

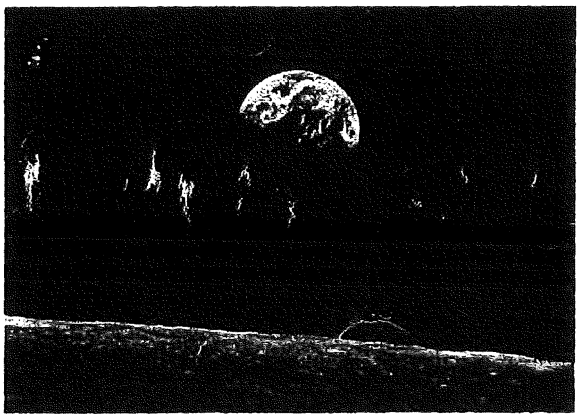
Travis.

PS, to the Writer of Anarchy and Text, I enjoyed your article, you may find the novel HE, SHE AND IT, also known as THE GLASS MAN by one of the favourites of the anarcho / left scene, Marge Piercy an interesting read.

Hmm....Having read the article a few times it's difficult to draw the same inferences that Travis has, nevertheless, there's clearly a great deal of interest in the topic. Perhaps readers would like to expand the debate? Travis' letter mentions the fact that the Mirrar have consistently opposed the mine yet, the interests of environmentalists and of the Mirrar have not always converged. It has been suggested before, that there are fundamental differences in the European conception of 'nature' and the Aboriginal conception of 'land' and that this has led to conflict and pivots around the issue of who has what rights to which land. Who has a say? Who determines what?

Travis is curious as to what the ASG-M view is, it's on page 13 'Where we stand' as is put simply; 'We defend the earth, skies and waters and all flora and fauna from pollution and exploitation by capitalists, militarists and Government'.

As for the question of workers interests vs. the intersts of the enviroment there is an interesting article by Jeffrey Schantz titled Beyond Productivism: Syndicalism & Ecology. In the article he reckons, "The absence of workers' control allows coercion of workers into the performance of tasks which they might otherwise disdain, or which have consequences of which they are kept unimformed. Also, the abscence of self-determination results in workers competing with each other over jobs. This susceptibility is perhaps the greatest deterrent (to) alliances between labor and ecologists." The article is published in Anarcho-Syndicalist Review #25, Summer '99. Available at most good anarchist bookshops. - Ed.



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The Anarcho-Syndicalist SPORT

TOURNAMENT TIGHTENS UP AT THE TOP

The 1999 ASGM 8-ball tournament is tightening up as there is no clear leader after Round 6. With an average point spread of less than three separating the top 16 players, it's still anyone's tournament. The competition is evening out as more games are played and it looks like this one's going to go down to the wire.

NEW ENTRY TAKES TOP SPOT

New entry Khanny has taken top spot with a strong performance that included six wins in a row over rounds four through six equalling a tournament record set earlier by Peter. However, having dropped his last two matches to Leigh and Peter, his position is under threat but is bound to figure prominently come finals time. Other new entries include Andrew, Clare and Tristan.

HUGE MOVEMENT UP AND DOWN THE LADDER

Having dropped his first five games, '97 Champion Leigh was hanging on by his fingernails at No. 16 after round 2. But since his humiliating second round loss to Jason he's turned his season right around winning nine out of his last ten games rocketing to a top four berth. Clearly the form player at the minute.

On the surface, Eric's huge boost from rock bottom to second spot seems impressive. But this has been on the strength of only two games. He still has five games to play to qualify and on that basis it's best to reserve judgement on the question of his claim to sport's ultimate trophy.

At the other end of the scale, Egon's season started with a faint glimmer of hope only to be snuffed out like a little candle similiar to the ones you get on cupcakes at kids' parties. After Round 2, he had one default win sitting at No.13. Since crashing to the basement he has defiantly declared, " I still have an opportunity to play seven games over the next two rounds and I fully intend to make to most of it". He's still a chance - mathematically speaking.

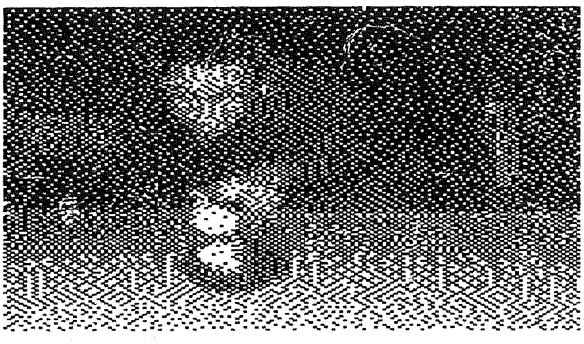
David started well winning four of his first five games and finding himself at No.4, but alas, has struggled to get bonus points from fewer wins since. Now clinging to thirteenth place. However, one would be a fool to discount the 'Bearded Enigma'.

Ladder after Round 6 played on 28 June

Name	Played	Won	Points	Av. points
1 Khanny	10	7	36	3.60
2 Eric	3	2	10	3.33
3 Brendan	11	7	36	3.27
4 Leigh	15	9	49	3.27
5 Sean	9	7	28	3.11
6 Peter	10	8	31	3.10
7 Chris	12	7	35	2.92
8 Poolpig	7	4	20	2.86
9 Guy	11	7	27	2.46
10 Brenton	11	5	24	2.18
11 Tristan	11	5	23	2.00
12 Madwog	9	5	17	1.89
13 David	13	7	24	1.85
14 Zelda	4	2	7	1.75
15 Andrew	9	3	13	1.44
16 Emile	7	3	10	1.43
17 Matt	13	3	8	0.62
18 Bonnie	8	3	4	0.50
19 Clare	6	1	3	0.50
20 Egon	9	2	3	0.33

1999 Player Profile

CHRIS



Chris is one of the few players to have competed in every ASGM 8-ball tournament since the inaugural event in 1997 when he was widely regarded as warm favourite. But 8-ball is a funny game and in the 1997 Elimination Round he suffered a shock loss to Bonnie who earnt the title 'Giant-killer' for her fine effort. Last year he went all the way to defeat Buck in the Grand Final and is the reigning champion. In 1998, he lost only two matches for the entire season. Currently seeded at No. 7 on the ladder, he has scored 35 points out of seven wins from 12 games for an average of 2.92 after Round 6 of the 1999 season. A player to watch.

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